

Dear Barbara Park,

A pale girl sat silently on a red furry carpet. Her kindergarten teacher was reading a *Junie B. Jones* book as she sat in her almighty teacher chair with her legs crossed. The girl stared in amazement at the book, interested in every word. The twist was that she couldn't understand any of those words.

The girl was a Vietnamese immigrant who didn't know a single word of English. Her dad would read to her every night and teach her how to pronounce words, but school was the most helpful. Reading for her was like solving a puzzle with over 1,000 pieces, slowly putting them together.

Struggling to understand what was happening in Junie B. Jones's life in a new language was of course difficult. But that unclearness and mystery made her determined to be able to read *Junie B. Jones* books herself. Until then, the girl's teacher would break down what was happening to Junie and that made her understand and learn more each day. That frustrated and determined girl was me.

When I was in second grade, I was forced to pick books with yellow stickers – the thin books with big words and pictures. I felt worthless and thought to myself that I was a horrible reader who would never be fluent in English. I couldn't catch up with my other classmates who were mostly reading the "thick" books with small print and longer words. Some were actually reading chapter books like *The Magic Tree House* series. But every time I picked up a yellow sticker book, I knew it was going to help me get closer to read the *Junie B. Jones* series!

During that summer, preparing for 3rd grade, I sat long hours trying to decipher a Junie B. Jones book called *Junie B. Jones is a Beauty Shop Guy*. I stuttered and sounded out each word until I got it. I would read a chapter over and over again until I understood what was going on.

I laughed at Junie when she had to wear so many hats to hide her haircut mistake. But I felt bad when she didn't know how to explain her problem. In the end, she ended up with a new haircut same as mine. Sometimes my dad would help me along the way and ask me questions to see if I understood. It was like trying to find my way out of a foggy thick tropical rainforest!

When third grade began, I proudly held that *Junie B. Jones* book I had read over the summer in my arms. A few months later, my class was divided up into reading groups. There was the group who had to read the thin books which I didn't want to be in; the group that read the almost thick books, just with smaller words; and finally the group who read the chapter books. When my name was called out, I was shocked. I literally cried. I was chosen to be in the chapter book group.

I felt that the *Junie B. Jones* series built so much determination inside of me and helped me become the strong reader I am today. I want to thank you for writing such a great series that

kids in elementary schools, or some people who are starting to get better at English, could enjoy.

Sincerely, the pale girl,

Thanh Nguyen